Chapter III

SOME VARIATIONS ON THE THEME OF MODERN MATERIALISM

BEFORE GOING on to review briefly the theories of the middle part of our scale, those which claim to be somewhere between the mechanistic and the dualistic, we may briefly notice certain attempts to help the mechanical biology out of its difficulties by the formulation of quasi-materialistic hypotheses.

If matter, as known to physics and chemistry, the matter consisting of atoms combined together in molecules and colloidal solutions of molecules, seems not to have properties which make possible any explanation of the principle phenomena presented by living things in terms of those properties alone, nor yet with the addition of forces and energies as recognized by a considerable proportion of modern physicists, nor yet again if the ether be thrown in as a supplementary hypothesis, why not try to imagine, as the basis or substance of living things, something resembling the matter of physics and chemistry, but yet essentially different from it ?

There are three obvious possibilities to be examined. One is the possibility that the aggregation of atoms in larger systems which gives us the molecules of the inorganic world may be carried to a further point in the organic world, resulting in the formation of what might be called super-matter. A second

possibility is the postuktion of systems of electrons different from atoms